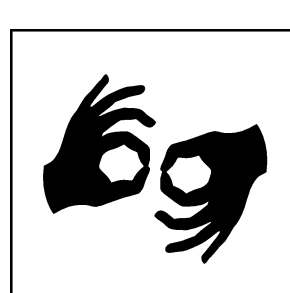
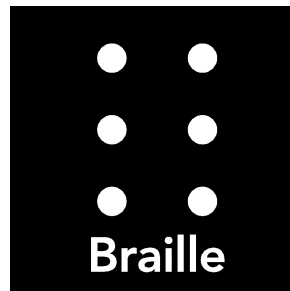
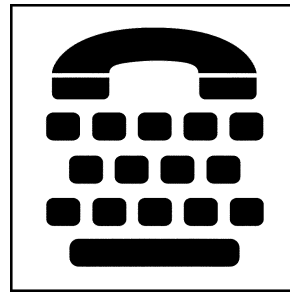
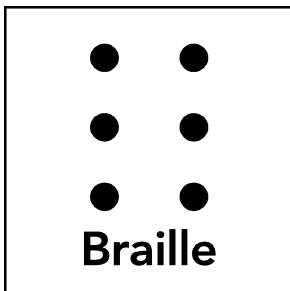
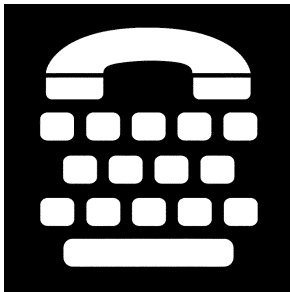


# Disability

## Etiquette Handbook



# City of Las Vegas Guide to Disabilities and Disability Etiquette

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	2
Distinction between Disability and Handicap .....	2
Basic Reception Etiquette .....	3
Ask Before You Help.....	3
Do Not Touch .....	3
Engage Your Mind Before Engaging Your Mouth .....	3
Make No Assumptions .....	3
Respond Graciously To Requests .....	3
Be Yourself .....	4
Meeting Someone.....	4
Inclusiveness .....	4
Environments .....	4
Service Animals .....	4
Mobility Devices.....	5
Terminology .....	5
Glossary of Acceptable Terms.....	6
Interacting with People with Specific Disabilities .....	7
People with Mobility Disabilities .....	7
People with Speech Disabilities .....	7
People who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.....	7
People with Visual Disabilities .....	8
People with Invisible Disabilities.....	8

# Guide to Disabilities and Disability Etiquette

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This guide to Disabilities and Disability Etiquette has been prepared to allow City staff to become familiar with a variety of types of disabilities, and help them to be more sensitive to the abilities and needs of people with disabilities in order not to offend or demean them.

## Introduction

The National Organization on Disability reports that more than 59 million Americans have a disability. This handbook is for anyone — with or without a disability — who wants to interact more effectively with people who are disabled.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 was conceived with the goal of integrating people with disabilities into all aspects of American life, particularly the workplace and the marketplace. Sensitivity toward people with disabilities is not only in the spirit of the ADA, it makes good business sense. It can help the City expand its services to citizens, better serve its customers and improve relationships with its employees.

Practicing disability etiquette is an easy way to make all people feel more comfortable and welcomed in their environment. There is no reason to feel awkward when dealing with a person who has a disability. This handbook is yet another step toward making the city of Las Vegas more accessible to all who visit, live and work here.

## Distinction between Disability and Handicap

A Disability is a condition caused by an accident, trauma, genetics or disease which may limit a person's mobility, hearing, vision, speech, or mental function. Some people with disabilities have one or more disabilities.

A Handicap is a physical or attitudinal constraint that is imposed upon a person, regardless of whether that person has a disability. Merriam-Webster's Electronic Dictionary defines "handicap" as "a disadvantage that makes achievement unusually difficult".

Example: Some people with disabilities use wheelchairs. Stairs, narrow doorways and curbs are handicaps imposed upon people with disabilities who use wheelchairs.

People with disabilities have all manner of disabling conditions:

- mobility impairments
- blindness and vision impairments
- deafness and hearing impairments
- speech and language impairments
- cognitive and learning impairments

## **Basic Reception Etiquette**

### **Ask Before You Help**

Just because someone has a disability, don't assume he/she needs your help. If the setting is accessible, people with disabilities can usually get around fine without assistance. Adults with disabilities want to be treated as independent people. Offer assistance only if the person appears to need it. If they do want help, ask what type of help they would like before you offer any assistance. What you think they may need may not be what they really need.

Do not be offended if someone refuses your offer of assistance. Ask yourself, "Would I want help in a similar situation?" It is the person's choice to be as independent as they can be. Talk directly to the person, not to an aide, friend, or interpreter. If the person has a speech disability, listen carefully and patiently. Ask him to repeat if you do not understand. If the person does not understand you when you speak, try again. Do not let him think your communication with him is not worthwhile to you.

### **Do Not Touch**

Some people with disabilities depend on their arms for balance. Grabbing them – even if you mean well – could knock them off balance and create an injury. This is especially true of a person using a cane, crutches, or walker. When someone is in a wheelchair, never pat their head or touch their wheelchair (or scooter) without permission. This equipment is part of their personal space and touching it is considered rude. However, you may gently touch a deaf person to get his attention. Do not pet service animals. Never push a person's wheelchair without his or her permission. Please do not recoil if you meet a person with AIDS; shake his hand as you would anyone. You cannot get AIDS by touching.

### **Engage Your Mind Before Engaging Your Mouth**

Always speak directly to the person with the disability NOT to their companion, aide, or sign language interpreter. Making small talk with a person who has a disability is great; just talk to him/her like you would anyone else. Respect his/her privacy and don't ask questions about their disability unless they invite the discussion. If you are with a child who asks, don't make the situation awkward for everyone; let the person with the disability respond directly to the child. They are used to children's questions.

### **Make No Assumptions**

People with disabilities are the best judge of what they can or cannot do. Do not make any decisions for them about participating in any activity or what they may or may not be able to do. Simply respond to their questions and let them make their own decisions. Depending on the situation, it may be a violation of the ADA to exclude someone because of a wrong decision on what they're capable of doing.

### **Respond Graciously To Requests**

When people who have a disability ask for an accommodation at a city owned property, it is not a complaint. It shows they feel comfortable enough in your establishment to ask for what they need. If they

get a positive response, they will enjoy their transaction and feel comfortable to come back again and again. Unless they are asking for something outlandish, provide what is asked for. If they request something unreasonable, contact your ADA Coordinator for a direction toward a resolution.

## **Be Yourself**

Treat people with disabilities with the same respect and consideration that you have for everyone else. Engage in small talk, the way you would with anyone. Use your usual voice when extending a verbal welcome. Do not raise your voice unless requested. As in any new situation, everyone will be more comfortable if you relax.

## **Meeting Someone**

When you meet someone, extend your hand to shake if that is what you usually do. A person who cannot shake hands will let you know. He or she will appreciate being treated as you would anyone else. If you are meeting a blind person, identify yourself. If you have met before, remind him of the context; he won't have the visual clues to jog his memory.

## **Inclusiveness**

Do not leave a person with a disability out of a conversation or activity because you feel uncomfortable or fear that they will feel uncomfortable. Include him as you would anyone else. They know what they can and want to do; let it be their decision whether or not to participate. If the person is deaf or hard of hearing, follow his lead; use gestures or write. If the person uses a wheelchair, sit and converse at his level.

## **Environments**

Be sensitive about the setting. A noisy or dark environment, or people talking simultaneously, might make it difficult for people with a vision, speech, or hearing disability to participate in a conversation. Be aware of clear paths of travel for people who use wheelchairs or are blind. Describe going-on and surroundings (especially obstacles) to blind person. A person with chemical sensitivity may have a reaction to smoke, perfume, cleaning products, or other forms of toxins in the environment.

## **Service Animals**

Although the most familiar types of service animals are dogs used by people who are blind, service animals are able to assist persons who have other disabilities as well. Many disabling conditions are invisible. Therefore, every person who is accompanied by a service animal may or may not “look” disabled. A service animal is NOT required to have any special certification.

A service animal is NOT a pet!

According to the ADA Regulations and Standards, service animal means a dog or miniature horse that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability. Other species of animals, whether wild or domestic, trained or untrained, are not service animals under the ADA. Companion and therapy animals

do provide valuable services to their guides, however do not enjoy the same access to buildings and spaces service animals do.

Individuals with disabilities shall be permitted to be accompanied by their service animals in all areas of a public entity's facilities where members of the public, participants in services, programs, or activities, or invitees, as relevant, are allowed to go. (35.136 Service animals (g))

### Service Animal Etiquette

- Do not touch the Service Animal, or the person it assists, without permission.
- Do not make noises at the Service Animal; it may distract the animal from doing its job.
- Do not feed the Service Animal; it may disrupt his/her schedule.
- Do not be offended if the person does not feel like discussing his/her disability or the assistance the Service Animal provides. Not everyone wants to be a walking-talking "show and tell" exhibit.

## **Mobility Devices**

Mobility devices, or manually-powered mobility aids include wheelchairs, walkers, crutches, canes, braces or other similar devices designed for use by individuals with mobility impairments in any area open to pedestrian use.

Other power-driven mobility devices include a range of devices not designed for individuals with mobility issues, such as the Segway, but which are often used by people with disabilities as their mobility device of choice. Other power-driven mobility devices must be permitted to be used unless it can be demonstrated that such use would fundamentally alter the City's programs, services, or activities, create a direct threat, or create a safety hazard. In order to accommodate the safe operation of a facility and the growing use of the Segway as a mobility device, contact the ADA Coordinator's Office to review the full list of factors to be considered when making this determination.

## **Terminology**

PUT THE PERSON FIRST! Always say "person with a disability" rather than "disabled person". This recognizes that they are a person first, not a disability first. If someone has a specific disability, it would be a "person who is blind", a "person who is deaf", or a "person with dwarfism". Each person may have their own preferred terminology, and if you're not sure what to use, just ask them. Most, however, will recognize the effort when you just refer to them as "people".

Language is powerful, but attitudes and behaviors are the most difficult barriers for people with disabilities to overcome. Treat the person as an individual rather than as a disability.

Be aware that many people with disabilities dislike jargon and euphemistic terms like "physically challenged" and "differently abled". Say "wheelchair user" instead of "confined to a wheelchair" or "wheelchair bound". The wheelchair is what enables the person to get around, but they are neither confined by it nor bound to it. The wheelchair is liberating, not confining.

With any disability, avoid negative, disempowering words like "victim" or "sufferer". Say "person with AIDS" instead of "AIDS victim" or person who "suffers from AIDS".

It's okay to use idiomatic expressions when talking to people with disabilities. For example, saying "It was good to see you" and "See you later" to a person who is blind is completely acceptable. They will use the same terminology and it's inappropriate to respond with questions like, "How are you going to see me later?"

People in wheelchairs will say things like, "Let's go for a walk" and it's okay for you to say it too. The situation will only become awkward if you make it so. Many people who are Deaf communicate with sign language and consider themselves to be members of a cultural and linguistic minority group. They refer to themselves as Deaf (with a capital D) and may be offended by the term "hearing impaired." Others may not object to the term, but in general it is safest to refer to people who have hearing loss but communicate through a spoken language as "people with hearing loss" and those who have a profound hearing loss as "people who are Deaf".

## Glossary of Acceptable Terms

Acceptable Terms	Unacceptable Terms
Person with a disability.	Cripple, cirpples – the image conveyed is of a twisted, deformed, useless body.
Disability, a general term used for functional limitation that interferes with a person's ability, for example, to walk, hear or lift. It may refer to a physical, mental or sensory condition.	Handicap, handicapped person or handicapped.
People with cerebral palsy, people with spinal cord injuries.	Cerebral palsied, spinal cord injured, etc. Never identify people solely by their disability.
Person who had a spinal cord injury, polio, a stroke, etc., or a person who has multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, arthritis, etc.	Victim. People with disabilities do not like to be perceived as victims for the rest of their lives, long after any victimization has occurred.
Has a disability, has a condition of (spina bifida, etc.), or born without legs.	Defective, defect, deformed, vegetable. These words are offensive, dehumanizing, degrading and stigmatizing.
Deafness/hearing impairment. Deafness refers to a person who has a total loss of hearing. Hearing impairment refers to a person who has a partial loss of hearing within a range from slight to severe.  Hard of hearing describes a hearing-impaired person who communicates through speaking and speech-reading, and who usually has listening and hearing abilities adequate for ordinary telephone communication. Many hard of hearing individuals use a hearing aid.	Deaf and Dumb is as bad as it sounds. The inability to hear or speak does not indicate intelligence.
Intellectually disabled <i>In response to "Rosa's Law" signed into law October 6, 2010.</i>	Mentally retarded, moron, imbecile, and idiot. These are offensive to people who bear the label.
Use a wheelchair or crutches; a wheelchair user; walks with crutches.	Confined/restrained to a wheelchair; wheelchair bound. Most people who use a wheelchair or mobility device do not regard them as confining. They are viewed as liberating; a means of getting around.
Able-bodied; able to walk, see, hear, etc.; people who are not disabled.	Healthy, when used to contrast with "disabled". Healthy implies that the person with a disability is unhealthy. Many people with disabilities have excellent health.
People who do not have a disability.	Normal. When used as the opposite of disabled, this implies that the person is abnormal. No one wants to be labeled as abnormal.
A person who has (name of disability.) Example: A person who has multiple sclerosis.	Afflicted with, suffers from. Most people with disabilities do not regard themselves as afflicted or suffering continually. A disability is not an affliction.

## Interacting with People with Specific Disabilities

### People with Mobility Disabilities

Mobility disabilities range from lower body disabilities, which may require use of canes, walkers, or wheelchairs, to upper body disabilities, which may result in limited or no use of the hands.

Remember to talk directly to the person, not to an aide, and do not assume a companion is an aide. When having an extended conversation with someone in a wheelchair or scooter, talk to the person at eye-level by sitting or crouching down to his or her approximate. It is okay to invite a person in a wheelchair to “go for a walk.” Never touch or lean on a person’s wheelchair unless you have permission—it is that person’s personal space. Give a push only when asked. Enable people who use crutches, canes, walkers, wheelchairs, or scooters to keep their mobility aids within reach, unless they request otherwise.

Examples of accommodations for people with mobility disabilities include hosting events in accessible locations, providing adjustable tables, and ensuring that equipment and other items are located within reach.

### People with Speech Disabilities

Some disabilities affect the ability to speak. Computer-based speech output systems provide an alternative voice for some people with cannot speak.

Listen patiently and carefully. Address persons with speech disabilities as you would anyone else in the same situation. Do not complete sentences for a person with a speech disability unless he specifically asks you for help. Do not pretend you understand what they say, just to be polite.

Do not let other people interrupt a person with a speech disability simply because they talk louder. If you do not understand what is said to you, ask the person to repeat it or to say it a different way. Keep good eye contact. If a person with a speech disability is using a trained speech interpreter, speak to and keep eye contact with the person, not the person interpreting what’s being said. If the person uses an amplifier or other device, do not touch it, as that is part of his or her personal space.

Examples of accommodations for people with mobility disabilities include taking more time for communication and providing or accepting information in writing or via email.

### People who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing may use some combination of lip-reading, sign language, and amplification to communicate.

If you need to attract the attention of a person who is Deaf or hard of hearing, you may touch them lightly on the shoulder or arm. When you speak to people who rely on lip reading and amplification, you should face them so that they can see your lips. Slow your rate of speech, speak your words clearly, and increase your volume, if requested. Shouting usually does not help. Not all people with hearing loss can read lips. For those people, other forms of communication may be necessary. Some may offer to write messages back and forth. For some, American Sign Language (ASL) is their first language and they may require a sign language interpreter to understand proceedings or join in a conversation. With people who use sign language interpreters, speak to them, not to their interpreters.



Examples of accommodations for people who are Deaf or hard of hearing include the provision of interpreters, sound amplification systems, note takers, visual aids, and the use of electronic mail for communication.

## **People with Visual Disabilities**

Visual disabilities may range on a spectrum from total blindness to low vision. People with low vision may have some usable sight however standard written materials may be too small to read and objects may appear blurry

When working with a person with a visual disability be descriptive. Describe goings-on and surroundings, especially obstacles, to the person. You may need to help orient people with visual disabilities and let them know what is coming up. Be the assistant, not the director. If you are asked for assistance, let a blind person hold your arm as a guide. If they are walking, tell them when they have to step up or step down; let them know if the door is to their right or left; and warn them of possible hazards. Be the assistant, not the director; let a blind person hold your arm and follow you.

You do not have to speak loudly to people with visual disabilities. Most of them can hear just fine. When appropriate, offer to read written information for a person with a visual disability. It is okay to ask blind people if they “see what you mean.” If you are meeting a blind person, identify yourself. If you have met before, remind the person of the context because he or she won’t have the visual cues to jog the memory.

Examples of accommodations for people with visual disabilities include providing large print text or Braille documents, providing printed materials recorded on audiotape or CD, and ensuring that electronic PDF documents are compatible with screen reader technology.

## **People with Invisible Disabilities**

Not all disabilities are apparent. Because a person does not use a wheelchair, have hearing aids, or use a cane does not mean that they do not have a disability.

A person may have difficulty following a conversation, may not respond when you call or wave, or may say or do something that seems inappropriate. The person may have an invisible disability such as an autism spectrum disorder, seizure disorder, learning disability, brain injury, developmental disability, mental illness, or a health condition. These are just a few of the many different types of invisible disabilities. Try to be open-minded and avoid making assumptions about the person or the disability.

Do not assume the person is not listening merely because you are not getting any verbal or visual feedback. Instead, ask whether they understand or agree. When interacting with a person with an invisible disability, remain calm, lower your energy, and understand that they may be experiencing over sensitization. Keep instructions simple and provide them one at a time.

Examples of accommodations for people who have invisible disabilities include providing a quiet, low stimulus location, audio taped or written instructions, and extra time to complete tasks.